

# “When Our Freedom Is Threatened”

By: Lea Brumfield

Row after row, the marble pillars of a stone garden stand quietly in memory of the dead. The garden is the Arlington National Cemetery, and the dead are the 260,000 honored heroes of America, the brave men and the women who gave their lives in service of their country. Presidents lie there, along with generals, military nurses, war correspondents, and enlisted soldiers. Many more stand ready for combat, proud underneath the stars and stripes, waiting to fight for the freedoms of America's lifeblood and possibly join the ranks of those laid to rest in the stone garden. When some would terrorize the American people, threaten the U.S. government, and bleed America of her freedoms, the men and women of the armed forces rise up to fight back and protect our precious democracy.

These heroes of our nation were not extraordinarily valiant, were not born to fight, and did not glory in the wars they fought. Most probably shook in their boots, gulped their fear, and charged ahead, fighting for the liberties America holds close to her heart. Neither are the men and women serving in the today's military as fearless as gods are. They live ordinary lives, fall in love, marry, have children, buy houses, drive minivans, and adopt cocker spaniels. I know, because my mother is one of them.

My mother is a lieutenant commander of the United States' Navy, and she dresses in khaki and ribbons every day. She drives a station wagon instead of a minivan, and our dog is a sheltie, not a cocker spaniel, but she is real, a hero and my mother at the same time. When I grew two inches taller than she did, she pouted and laughed, but she's the one who goes to work with courage in her heart, not me. She carries my picture in her wallet like every mom, but the people she shows it to are commander, lieutenants, captains, and generals.

Eight months ago, my mother was called away, deployed to a foreign country where I couldn't follow her. She wrote and called often, but I awaited the next letter anxiously, and the click at the end of each phone call drove me to tears. I had always dimly known, but that three month's separation drove the thought home: every time my mother left, I might never see her again.

Hundreds, thousands of military families face the same fear, hold the same anxiety, and cry the same tears of worry. When our freedoms are threatened, our armed forces pack their seabags, update their wills, and turn towards the enemy. It's their job; their duty and they perform it with pride and honor. We kiss them goodbye and cry into our hands praying our mothers, fathers; husbands, wives, sister and brothers will come back. We can only hope our loved ones won't give the ultimate sacrifice, won't leave us forever to join the heroes who lay in the stone gardens of Arlington National Cemetery.

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